DISTINGVISHED
AMERICAN ARTISTS

ROBERT HENRI

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ROBERT HENRI

Compiled by

NATHANIEL POUSETTE-DART

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ROBERT HENRI

ROBERT HENRI, in American art, stands for what Manet stood for in French art, and what Goya stood for in Spanish art. He is a strong character, and a powerful influence; a man who has stood like a rock for his ideals. He is a born fighter and he has always fought for individuality in art. He believes that what an artist has to express is the vital thing; that technique may be important, but that it should never be an end in itself.

Henri is a student, always. His eye and his mind's eye are always on the alert for new discoveries. Life means evolution to him; it means destruction and creation. He is equally attuned to the delicate, and to the brutal, to the spiritual and to the material.

Like Bernard Shaw, he faces life squarely. Both of these men love reality, but they abhor photographic representation. They are neither of them portrait painters in the accepted sense; rather they are creators of their own race of people. A mere likeness is a vulgar thing to them: they are after the quintessence of the spirit. Sometimes they fail, and their work is wooden, but when they succeed it is electrified with real creative genius. They both love humanity, but they love their own people more.

It has been said of Henri that some of his earlier work shows the influence of other artists. This is true, and it shows that he has always been a real, live, growing artist. It is the great man who can utilize knowledge from many

different sources, selecting from each that which he can weave into the fabric of his own personality. It is he who realizes that he must manipulate one existing substance into ever-changing, plastic forms that will create emotion.

Henri's style is simple, and therein lies its strength. Nothing is painted that should have been left out. When he paints an eye, he may use three brush strokes, or twenty, but there is never any fumbling or uncertainty so far as the end in view is concerned. It is either right or wrong. Either he has failed, and the result is mere paint, or he has succeeded in creating a thing that pulsates with life. This shows how honest the man is. He cannot fake, and he hates pretense.

Perhaps the one quality that dominates in his work is vitality, a vigor that is both intellectual and physical. One is never conscious of any laziness or indecision in his make-up. His jaws are set, he has a grip that tightens rather than loosens.

Henri paints with a broad brush; he paints the essentials, the things that count in art. In his portrait work he is seeking to eliminate the element of time, to achieve universality, and to hint the mysteries of the fourth dimension. To the uncritical and superficial his work may seem unstudied, but the reverse is true. His interest in organization is intense, and each canvas is worked out structurally in a very careful way.

He is alive to what Clive Bell calls "significant form," * that fundamental and profound quality achieved by the early Egyptians, Greeks and Chinese.

* *See "Art" by Clive Bell.*

His vision is that of the idealist. He is never unkind, and he has a veritable blind spot for blemishes.

He is a great egoist, as every great creator must be, and sees everything from his own intensely personal point of view. He reorganizes all the material for expression within his own inner self, colors it with his own character. It is always white-hot with conviction.

Robert Henri was born in Cincinnati in 1865. He comes of a family for many generations in America, the original stock being French, English and Irish. At first he thought that writing was his forte, but painting soon became the stronger attraction. In 1886, he entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where he began his studies under Thomas Anshutz, one of the few great teachers of art that we have had in this country. A few years later, he went to Paris, where he studied under Fleury and Bougereau at Juliens. The academic restraint there, however, soon proved too much for him, and we find him on his way to the Louvre, where, to his relief, he found the work of artists who impressed him by their intense reactions to life. The big simplicity of the Spaniards impressed him. He experienced a rebirth; something within him expanded and flowered, and from that moment he knew what great art meant. Later he passed under the influence of the then radical Courbet, Manet and Whistler. Their influence was, however, only temporary. His personality continued to make itself felt until these other influences gradually disappeared, and the character of Henri emerged supreme.

Since those early days, he has always begun a painting

as though he were going into battle. He must always either win or lose; there can be no middle ground of mediocre accomplishment. It is this fearlessness that is so attractive in his work. He attacks each new problem with a different spirit, and the result is a different technique in every instance. He has painted many children, but each one of them has been brushed into life in a different way. This varied technique is shown also in his color. Always he is an experimenter, mixing brains and paint.

His portraits of laboring men are astonishing. One feels that he has fairly cut them out of paint with understanding and feeling. In some of them the paint seems to have been driven onto the canvas with terrific force.

His portraits have an air of unstudied alertness, because, in every instance he has done his thinking beforehand. Before he touches brush to canvas, his picture is painted. For it is the vision back of his eyes that he paints, and not the image in front of them. This particular quality is very noticeable in his portraits of Himself and Herself. There is no seemingly laborious execution, but this does not mean that they have been done with ease. Each canvas is a new adventure, and sometimes the peaks are hard to climb.

As a teacher of art, Mr. Henri has few equals. He seems to grasp the possibilities of his students in such a way that he is able to guide them toward an expression of power. He awakens the dormant potentialities in each student, develops his courage, and helps him transfer his own personality to canvas. There is nothing academic

about his teaching. He never tries to get his students to put down pretty, senseless lines, or to draw "correctly." He teaches control. Each brush-stroke must express a conviction, must be a valuable link in the organization of his subject. It must be dynamic, whether it be delicate or strong. He teaches that to paint well it is not alone necessary to feel; one must also think. Great art, according to Robert Henri, is never an accident.

N. P-D.

The sixty-four paintings herein reproduced illustrate the varied characteristics of this artist's work.

LITTLE GIRL OF THE SOUTHWEST
Collection of Wilmington Society of Arts, Wilmington, Del.

THE GOAT HERDER

Portrait of Edward

CATHARINE
Collection of W. J. Johnson, Esq., Uniontown, Pa.

WILLIE GEE
Collection of Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.

Eva Green

PORTRAIT OF MARY FANTON ROBERTS
Collection of Mrs. William Carmen Roberts, New York, N. Y.

Captain H. G. Montgomery
Collection of H. G. Montgomery, Esq., New York, N. Y.

THE RED TOP.
Collection of Amos Pinchot, Esq., New York, N. Y.

LAUGHING GIPSY GIRL
Collection of Mrs. Marshall Field, Washington, D. C.

PORTRAIT OF E. WYATT DAVIS, ESQ.
Collection of E. Wyatt Davis, Esq., New York, N. Y.

JEAN NO. 3

DUTCH JOE

Collection of Art Institute of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wis.

Cinco Centimo
In Private Collection

Scheherazade

Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance

HIMSELF
Collection of Paul Schulze, Esq., Chicago, Ill.

HERSELF

Collection of Paul Schulze, Esq., Chicago, Ill.

Spanish Tango Dancer

El Picador

GREGORITA
In Private Collection

HAWAII AND NAVAHO

Indian Girl of Santa Clara, N. M.

HELEN

Tesuque Buck

THE LITTLE SPANISH DANCER

Mary of Connemara

IMAGINATIVE BOY

Collection of Mrs. Marshall Field, Washington, D. C.

Little Mexican Girl in Big Hat

JOSÉ

Collection of Dr. George Woodward, Chestnut Hill, Pa.

THE SEGOVIA GIRL

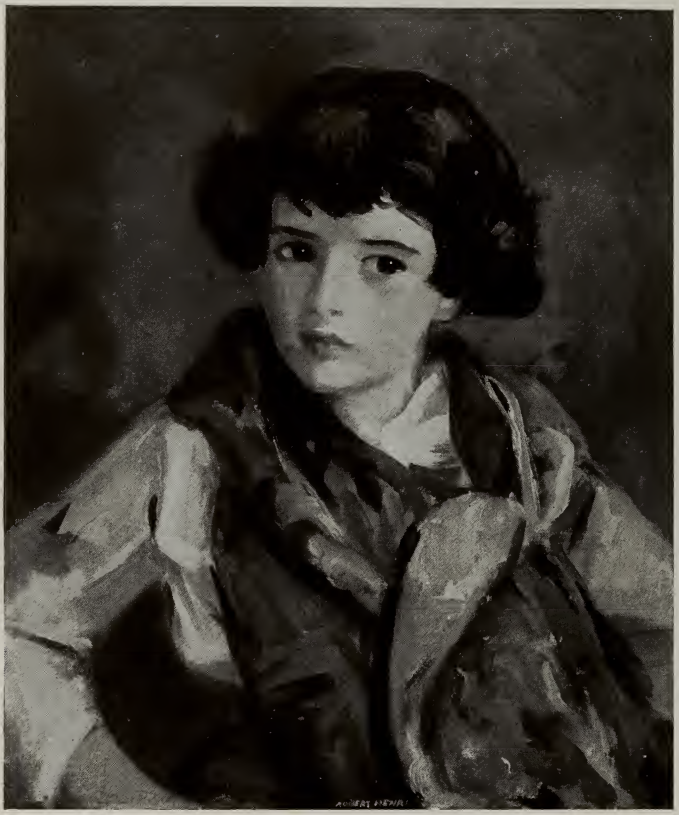
Agnes

La Novia

CECELIA

THE LITTLE ONE

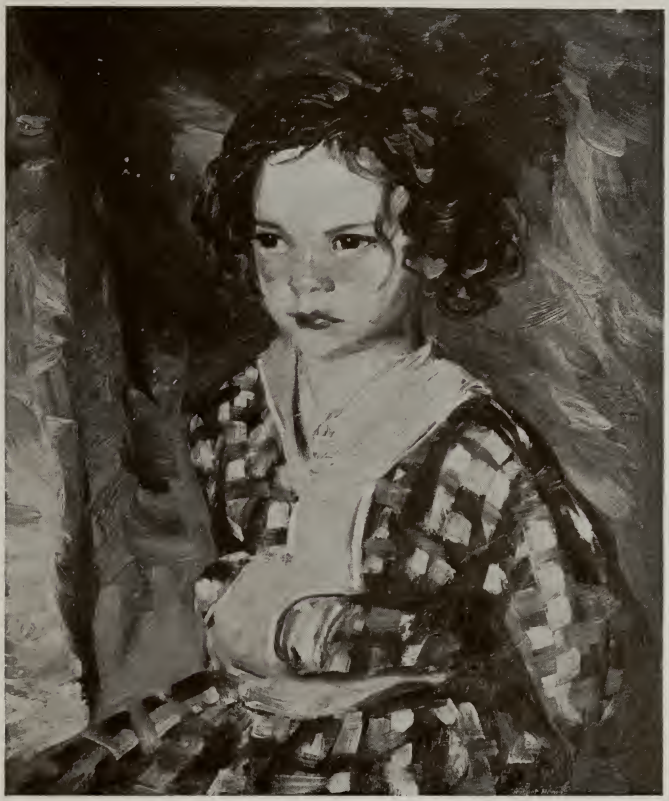
THE SHAVE HEAD
Collection of G. A. Stephens, Esq., Moline, Ill.



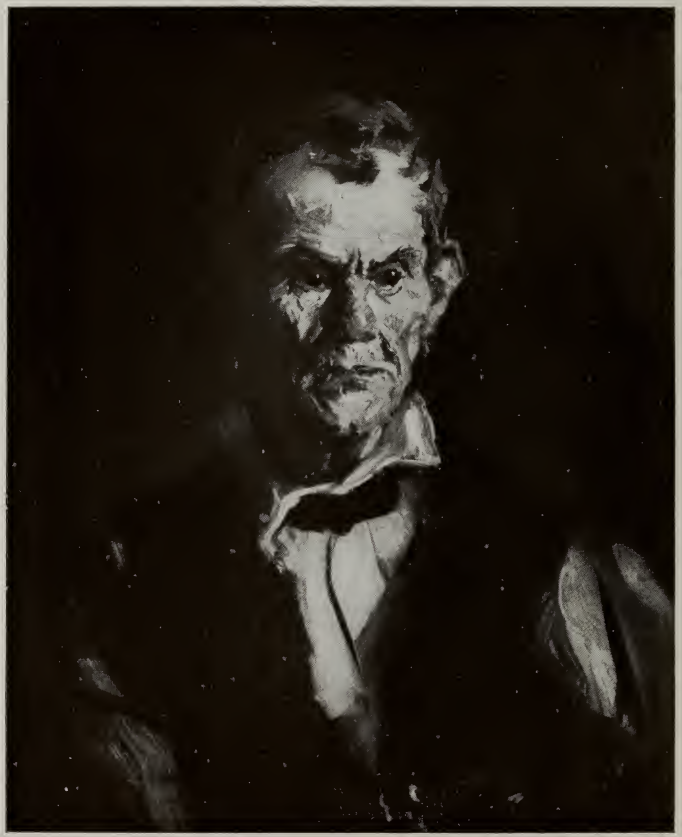
TONY
In Private Collection

Portrait of Fay Bainter

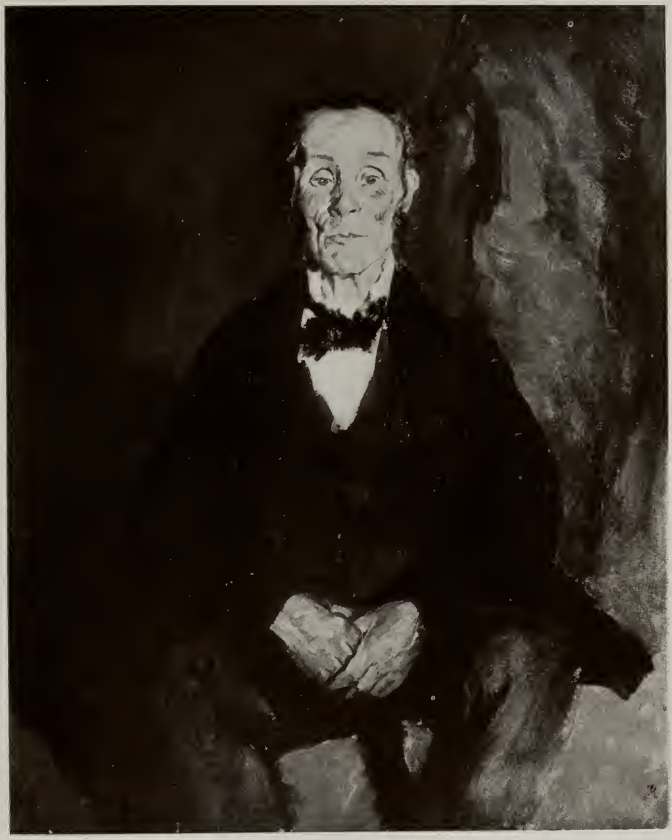
MANUS
Collection of Paul Schulze, Esq., Chicago, Ill.



PATIENCE SERIOUS
Collection of Walter J. Wichgar, Cincinnati, Ohio



Fish Market Man



THE GUIDE TO CROAGHAN
Collection of Miss Julia E. Peck, Detroit, Mich.

PORTRAIT OF "PAT" ROBERTS
Collection of Lloyd Roberts, Esq., Canada

PORTRAIT OF FAYETTE SMITH
Collection of Clyde M. Carr, Esq., Chicago, Ill.

ROSHANARA

YOUNG WOMAN IN BLACK
Collection of Art Institute of Chicago

THE SPANISH GIPSY
Collection of Metropolitan Museum, New York, N. Y.

Sis

Collection of Miss Julia E. Peck, Detroit, Mich.

The Fisherman

Head of a Man

THE BALLET DANCER
Collection of Adolph Lewisohn, Esq., New York, N. Y.

BETALO RUBINO — DRAMATIC DANCER
Collection of City Museum, St. Louis, Mo.

The Coal Breaker

Chinese Lady

57TH STREET IN 1902

La Neige

Collection of Luxembourg Gallery, Paris, France

PARIS NIGHT

Rue de Rennes

THE STORM TIDE

On the Marne

Far Rockaway in 1902

The Cité

Storm in the Catskills

THE BOY AND THE RAINBOW

ROBERT HENRI, 10 Gramercy Park, New York, N. Y., born Cincinnati, Ohio, 1865.

Studied at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pa.; Academie Julien and l'Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, 1888-1891, and for years independentiy in France, Spain and Italy.

MEMBER OF

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARTISTS, New York, 1903
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN—*Associate,* 1904
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN—*Academician,* 1906
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PORTRAIT PAINTERS
NATIONAL ARTS CLUB—*Life Member*
TAOS SOCIETY OF ARTISTS—*Associate*
LOS ANGELES MODERN ART SOCIETY—*Honorary Member*
PEOPLES ART GUILD OF NEW YORK
SCHOOL OF AMERICAN RESEARCH—*Board of Managers*
SOCIETY OF INDEPENDENT ARTISTS, New York
BOSTON ART CLUB—*Honorary Member*
NEW SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, New York
LEAGUE OF NEW YORK ARTISTS

AWARDS

Silver Medal, Pan American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901.
Silver Medal, Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904.
Norman W. Harris Medal and Prize of $500, Chicago Art Institute, 1905.
Gold Medal, Art Club of Philadelphia, 1909.
Silver Medal, International Fine Arts Exposition, Buenos Ayres, S. A., 1910.
Carol H. Beck Gold Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1914.
Silver Medal, Panama Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, 1915.
Portrait Prize, Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, 1920.

REPRESENTED IN

LUXEMBOURG GALLERY, PARIS .....*La Neige*
CHICAGO ART INSTITUTE .....*Young Woman in Black*
PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS ....*Girl With Fan*

CARNEGIE INSTITUTE, PITTSBURG ..... *Equestrian*
BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ARTS AND SCIENCES.. *The Laughing Girl*
GALLERY OF SPARTANBURG, S. C..... *The Girl With Red Hair*
ART ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS, DALLAS, TEXAS,
The Happy Hollander
COLUMBUS GALLERY OF THE FINE ARTS, COLUMBUS, O.,
Dancer in Yellow Shawl
ART ASSOCIATION OF NEW ORLEANS ..... *Spanish Gipsy Girl*
CAROLINA ART ASSOCIATION, CHARLESTON, S. C.,
Girl of Toledo, Spain
ART INSTITUTE OF KANSAS CITY, MO..... *The Blue Necklace*
SAN FRANCISCO INSTITUTE OF ART ..... *Lillian*
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK ..... *The Spanish Gipsy*
NATIONAL ARTS CLUB, NEW YORK ..... *Romany Girl*
MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHÆOLOGY, SANTA FE, N. M.,
The Indian Drummer
MINNEAPOLIS MUSEUM ..... *Fi*
BUFFALO FINE ARTS GALLERY, BUFFALO, N. Y. ..... *Tam Gan*
GALLERY OF OBERLIN COLLEGE, OBERLIN, O.. *Spanish Gipsy Girl*
MEMPHIS MUSEUM ..... *Achill Girl*
DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ART,
Young Girl, The Beach Hat, Boy With Plaid Scarf
TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART, TOLEDO, O. .... *The Cathedral Woods*
MILWAUKEE ART INSTITUTE ..... *Dutch Joe*
TELFAIR ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, SAVANNAH, GA.,
....*Madrilenita*
CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D. C. *Willie Gee*
CITY ART MUSEUM, ST. LOUIS.. *Betalo Rubino, Dramatic Dancer*
MUSEUM OF HISTORY, SCIENCE AND ART, LOS ANGELES, CAL.,
Pepette
WILMINGTON SOCIETY OF THE FINE ARTS, WILMINGTON, DEL.,
Little Girl of the Southwest
BUTLER ART INSTITUTE, YOUNGSTOWN, O..... *The Little Dancer*
CINCINNATI MUSEUM ..... *Beatrice*

PUBLISHED MATTER

Independent (Mag.), N. Y., June 25, 1908, "Robert Henri"—C. W. Barrel.

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Current Literature (Mag.), N. Y., April, 1912, "Robert Henri" —unsigned.

Fine Arts Journal (Mag.), N. Y., July, 1912, "Robert Henri" —F. B. Rutterauff.
Craftsman (Mag.), N. Y., Feb., 1908, "The Younger American Painters"—Edgerton.
Craftsman (Mag.), N. Y., Jan., 1909, "Individuality and Freedom in Art"—Robert Henri.
Craftsman (Mag.), N. Y., May, 1910, "The Exhibition of Independent Artists"—Robert Henri.
Craftsman (Mag.), N. Y., Feb., 1915, "My People"—Robert Henri.
Harper's Weekly (Mag.), April 13, 1907.
House Beautiful (Mag.), August, 1906, "Robert Henri."
Arts and Decoration (Mag.), N. Y., Dec., 1914, "An Ideal Exhibition Scheme"—Robert Henri.
Arts and Decoration (Mag.), N. Y., Nov., 1915, "Who's Who in Art"—Guy du Bois.
American Magazine of Art, Oct., 1916, "Robert Henri"—Oliver S. Tonks.
Touchstone (Mag.), N. Y., June, 1919, "Philosophy of a Portrait Painter"—E. Ralph Cheyney.

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